

(19)

Europäisches Patentamt

European Patent Office

Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 888 733 A2

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
07.01.1999 Bulletin 1999/01

(51) Int. Cl.⁶: A45D 26/00

(21) Application number: 98112288.0

(22) Date of filing: 02.07.1998

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(72) Inventor: Hashimoto, Kenji
Tokyo (JP)

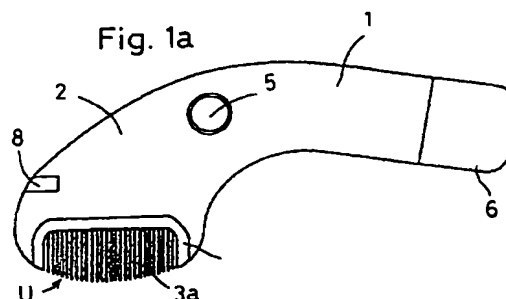
(74) Representative:
Schaumburg, Thoenes & Thurn
Postfach 86 07 48
81634 München (DE)

(30) Priority: 04.07.1997 JP 194908/97

(71) Applicant: Hashimoto, Kenji
Tokyo (JP)

(54) Body hair treating implement

(57) A body hair treating implement (10) includes a pair of opposed and spaced comb tooth plates (3) and an electrical heating element which is provided between the comb tooth plates (3) and is brought into contact with body hair combed by the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates (3), so that when the electrical heating element (4) is supplied with the electrical power, the heating element (4) generates heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith. The opposed comb teeth of the opposed comb tooth plates (3) are entirely or partly interconnected at their tip ends in the form of an arch.



EP 0 888 733 A2

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a body hair treating implement which can be advantageously used to cut or dress unwanted body hair of arms or legs, etc., or before one wears a bikini.

2. Description of the Related Art

For instance, if a cutting tool such as scissors or a razor is used to cut unwanted hair before one wears a hi-leg swimsuit or leotard, the tips of the cut hair are sharp due to shear cutting. The sharp tips can easily thrust into clothes of the swimsuit, etc., which he or she wears and protrude out of the clothes or cause the wearer to feel pain upon touching.

The inventor of the present application has proposed a hair treating implement having an electrical heating element which burns and cuts the body hair so as to leave a round tip on the hair (USP 5,064,993, EPO 434903, CA 2023908 or AUS 625947).

In this hair treating implement, provision is essentially made of two comb tooth plates which are spaced from one another so that the sides surfaces thereof are opposed to each other, and an electrical heater such as a nichrome wire which is provided between the opposed comb tooth plates and which is in contact with the body hair located between the adjacent comb teeth of the comb tooth plates, so that when the electrical power is supplied to the heater, the heater generates red-heat and burns and cuts the body hair brought into contact therewith. The body hair which is in contact with the heating wire can be easily burned and cut. The tip edges of the burned and cut hair are not sharp but round, unlike the conventional hair remover using a cutting tool such as a razor or scissors, etc., in which the hair is sheared.

The proposed hair treating implement can be also used as a hair dressing tool in a barber or beauty shop. Namely, the tips of the dressed hair can be rounded, curled or frizzled to obtain a desired hair style by burning and cutting the same using the heating element which is brought into slide-contact therewith.

In the case that the heating element is made of a fine wire such as a nichrome wire, it is possible to provide a heater cartridge (cassette) which can be removably attached to the implement body. Thus, if the heating wire is broken, it can be replaced with a new cartridge.

Means for absorbing an excessive looseness or elongation of the heating wire due to the thermal expansion upon generating heat is provided to tense the heating wire.

An internal power source type in which a dry battery

or storage battery is incorporated in the implement body or an external power source type in which an electrical power is supplied through a DC converter from an external commercial power source to which the hair treating implement is connected by a conductor can be used.

If the distance between the opposed comb tooth plates is too small, the nichrome wire as a heating element provided between the comb tooth plates is located so close to the inner surfaces of the comb tooth plates that a heat loss of the comb tooth plates is caused. To prevent this, in general, the distance between the comb tooth plates is set in the range of 5 to 10. The distance of 5 to 10 mm permits the finger tip or other foreign members to easily enter.

Furthermore, in the proposed hair treating implement, the outer shell (plastic mold) of the implement body which is composed of separate parts which can be assembled or disassembled houses therein;

- a) an electrical contact piece which is brought into contact with the heater cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the heating element of the heater cartridge with the electrical power from the implement body;
- b) a tensing means for tensing the heating element of the heater cartridge attached to the implement body;
- c) an operation switch (ON-OFF switch) for the heating element;
- d) a connector which can be connected to an external power source to receive the power therefrom; and
- e) a circuit board (electronic circuit board or electric circuit board) for controlling the power supply.

These elements are electrically connected to each other so as to achieve the respective functions. Thereafter, the separate parts of the outer shell are assembled to complete a product.

However, the incorporation and arrangement of the separate elements a) through e) in the outer shell are troublesome and make the structure of the implement complex. Moreover, the electrical connection of the electrical elements incorporated in the implement body using connecting wires complicates the assembling or manufacturing operation. Consequently, due to the synergistic action or the interaction of the operations, the yield of the parts or products may be reduced or the manufacturing cost may be increased.

From the viewpoint of safety, it is desirable that user's finger tip or other foreign members can not enter the space defined between the opposed comb tooth plates in which the heating element which generates heat when supplied with the electrical power is placed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is the primary object of the present invention to

provide a safe hair treating implement in which it is possible to prevent a finger tip or other foreign member from entering the opposed comb tooth plates.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a simple, inexpensive and high-quality hair treating implement in which the assembling operation of the parts can be standardized and no wiring operation is necessary, thus resulting in an increased yield of the parts or products and a reduced manufacturing cost.

According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided a body hair treating implement including a pair of opposed and spaced comb tooth plates and an electrical heating element which is provided between the comb tooth plates and is brought into contact with body hair combed by the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates, so that when the electrical heating element is supplied with the electrical power, the heating element generates heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith, wherein the opposed comb teeth of the opposed comb tooth plates are entirely or partly interconnected at their tip ends in the form of an arch.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a body hair treating implement including a pair of opposed and spaced comb tooth plates and an electrical heating element which is provided between the comb tooth plates and is brought into contact with body hair combed by the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates, so that when the electrical heating element is supplied with the electrical power, the heating element generates heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith, wherein the comb teeth of at least one of the opposed comb tooth plates are entirely or partly bent inward at their tip ends toward the corresponding comb teeth of the other comb tooth plate.

The comb tooth plates can be integrally formed as a comb tooth unit which can be detachably attached to an implement body.

According to still another aspect of the present invention, a body hair treating implement includes an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein electrical contact pieces which are brought into contact with the cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge from the implement body are provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.

In an embodiment, a tensing means for tensing the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body.

In another embodiment, electrical contact pieces for a power supply switch to select the power supply to the electrical heating element of the removable car-

tridge are provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.

In yet another embodiment, a power receiving connector which can be connected to an external power source is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.

According to another aspect of the present invention, in a body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, at least one of a) electrical contact pieces which come into contact with the removable cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the cartridge; b) a tensing means for tensing the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body; c) electrical switching contact pieces of a power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body; and d) a power receiving connector which is electrically connected to an external power source is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body.

In another aspect of the present invention, at least one of a) an electrode member which is adapted to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the cartridge; b) a tensing means for tensing the electrical heating element; c) electrical switching contact pieces of a power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element; and d) a power receiving connector which is electrically connected to an external power source is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body.

The heating element can be a heating wire or heating tube which directly or indirectly generates heat when energized to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith.

The electrical switching contact pieces of the power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element can be made of two elastic conductors which are supported at the base ends thereof by the circuit board and which can be elastically deformed so that the front ends of the elastic conductors are brought into contact with each other to close a power supply circuit. The elastic conductors are interconnected at the base ends thereof and are provided with longitudinal axes extending in different radial directions with respect to the interconnected base ends thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be described below in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which;

Figures 1a through 1e are a right side view, a plan view, a bottom view, a front elevational view and a back view, of a hair treating implement according to an embodiment of the present invention, respectively;

Figure 2 is an enlarged perspective view of a comb tooth plate of a hair treating implement shown in Figs. 1a through 1e;

Figure 3 is an enlarged cross sectional view of a comb tooth plate portion of a hair treating implement shown in Figs. 1a through 1e;

Figures 4a and 4b are enlarged cross sectional views of two different examples of a comb tooth plate portion of a hair treating implement;

Figure 5 is a partial bottom view of a hair treating implement according to another embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 6 is an enlarged cross sectional view of a comb tooth plate portion of a hair treating implement shown in Fig. 5;

Figure 7 is a back view of a hair treating implement shown in Fig. 5;

Figures 8a through 8c are enlarged cross sectional views showing three different shapes of a bent tip of a comb tooth plate portion of a hair treating implement shown in Fig. 5;

Figures 9a through 9e are a right side view, a plan view, a bottom view, a front elevational view and a back view, of a hair treating implement according to another embodiment of the present invention, respectively;

Figure 10 is a perspective view of an implement body, a heater cartridge and a DC converter shown in Figs. 9a through 9e;

Figure 11 is an exploded perspective view of an implement body shown in Fig. 10;

Figure 12 is a plan view of an internal structure of an implement body shown in Fig. 10;

Figures 13a and 13b are plan views of an internal structure of an implement body having a heater cartridge attached thereto and an implement body in which a rear end of a heater cartridge is moved rearwardly by rotating a heater detachment lever, respectively;

Figure 14 is a perspective view of a circuit board;

Figure 15 is an exploded perspective view of a circuit board;

Figure 16 is an enlarged schematic plan view of two electrical contact pieces;

Figure 17 is a perspective view of a heater cartridge to be attached to an implement body;

Figure 18 is an exploded perspective view of a heater cartridge;

Figure 19 is a perspective view of a rear end of a heater cartridge and a metal leaf spring as a tensing means;

Figure 20 is an explanatory view of a metal leaf spring acting on a heater cartridge;

Figure 21 is an explanatory view of a metal leaf spring acting on a heater cartridge shown in a position different from a position shown in Fig. 20; and,

Figure 22 is a schematic view of a rigid rod or tubular body as a heating element.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Fig. 1 (Figs. 1a through 1e) through Fig. 4 show a first embodiment of the present invention.

A body hair treating implement 10 is provided with a hand grip 1 (shank portion), a head 2 which is integrally provided at the front end of the hand grip 1, a pair of opposed right and left comb tooth plates 3, 3 which are provided on lateral sides of the head 2, a thin nichrome wire 5 which constitutes an electrical heating element extending in a space w defined between the comb tooth plates 3 and 3 in the longitudinal direction, and two switches 5, 5 in the form of a push button provided on the side portions of the implement body 10 at the junction between the hand grip 1 and the head 2. The hand grip 1 is in the form of a circular cylinder or tube which can be easily held by an operator's one hand. In the illustrated embodiment, the cylindrical hand grip 1 defines therein a battery compartment which receives three SUM-2 batteries connected in series. A plug cap 6 is detachably attached to the rear end of the hand grip 1 to close or open the battery compartment.

A user holds the hand grip 1 with his or her one hand; combs the body hair using the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates 3, 3; brings the nichrome wire 4 as an electrical heating element provided between the comb tooth plates 3, 3 into contact with an appropriate length of the body hair; and depresses one or both of the push button switches 5 and 5 using a thumb or index finger of his or her hand which holds the hand grip 1.

Consequently, the electrical circuit (not shown) for the nichrome wire 4 is closed, so that the electrical power is supplied to the nichrome wire 4 from the batteries accommodated in the hand grip 1. As a result, the nichrome wire 4 generates red-heat immediately, so that the body hair which is in contact with the heating nichrome wire 4 is burned and cut. When the switch 5 is released, the power supply to the nichrome wire 4 is interrupted, so that the temperature of the nichrome wire 4 is rapidly decreased.

In the illustrated embodiment, it is possible to supply the electrical power to the nichrome wire from a commercial power source through a DC converter without loading the batteries in the hand grip 1. To this end, the hand grip 1 is provided on the rear end thereof with a power receiving receptacle 7 in which an output terminal (plug) of the DC converter (not shown) can be inserted. Consequently, when the push button switch 5 is depressed, the electrical power is supplied to the nichrome fine wire 4 provided between the opposed comb tooth plates 3 and 3, so that the nichrome wire 4 generate red-heat. The power supply to the nichrome

wire 4 is indicated by an indication lamp 8 made of a light emitting diode or the like.

Since the heating element is made of a nichrome fine wire, the wire may be broken. If this occurs, it is desirable that the broken wire can be easily replaced. To this end, the nichrome wire 4 is formed as a removable heater cartridge C (Fig. 2) which is detachably attached to the implement body. Thus, when the nichrome wire is broken, the heater cartridge C is replaced with a new heater cartridge. The heater cartridge C is inserted in the head 2 through an insertion opening 9 formed at the front end of the head 2.

When the heater cartridge C is loaded in the implement body, the heater cartridge is electrically connected to a power supply circuit of the implement body. The nichrome wire 4 extends tensely in the longitudinal direction of the implement body between the opposed comb tooth plates 3 and 3.

A heater detachment lever 3c is actuated to move the heater cartridge C loaded in the implement body in the direction opposite the attachment (insertion) direction, so that the grip portion of the heater cartridge C is protruded from the insertion opening 9. Consequently, a user who grasps the grip portion of the heater cartridge removes the same from the implement body.

In the illustrated embodiment, the opposed comb tooth plates 3 and 3 are interconnected to form a generally U-shape (in the form of an arch), so that the opposed comb teeth 3a, 3a are interconnected at the front ends thereof.

Not only can the body hair be easily combed by the arch-shaped comb teeth 3a, but also a finger tip or other members cannot enter the space between the comb tooth plates 3 and 3, thus resulting in an enhanced safety.

In the illustrated embodiment, a comb tooth unit U having the opposed comb tooth plates 3, 3 with the comb teeth 3a, 3a interconnected at the tip ends thereof in the form of an arch as mentioned above is detachably attached to the head 2 of the implement body.

The head 2 of the implement body is provided with a projection or recess (not shown) which can be engaged by a recess or projection provided on the comb tooth unit U to firmly connect the comb tooth unit U to the head 2. The comb tooth unit U can be detached from the head 2 by disengaging the projection from the recess.

Alternatively it is possible to detachably attach the comb tooth unit U to the head 2 by means of screws, etc. Any detachable attachment of the comb tooth unit can be used.

Owing to the detachable attachment of the comb tooth unit U to the head 2, the comb tooth unit U can be easily washed after it is detached from the head or the comb tooth unit can be easily replaced with a new one when the comb tooth is broken.

The comb tooth plates 3 and 3 or the comb tooth unit U can be molded of heat-resisting plastics, ceram-

ics, or a metal, or the like.

For instance, the comb tooth unit U can be also made of a thin metal plate which is punched so as to have a number of parallel slits and which is thereafter bent into U-shape. It is possible to provide a guide rail for the heater cartridge on the inner surface of the comb tooth unit U.

The shape of the comb teeth can be optionally designed. Figs. 4a and 4b show two different shapes of the arch comb teeth by way of example.

It is possible to provide arch comb tooth plates whose comb teeth are partly or alternately interconnected.

Figs. 5 through 8 show a second embodiment of the present invention.

In this embodiment, all the comb teeth 3a and 3a of the opposed comb tooth plates 3 and 3 are bent inward at the front ends. The distance between the opposed bent front ends of the comb teeth 3a and 3a is in the range of 0.5 to 1 mm.

Other structure of the hair treating implement in the second embodiment is the same as that of the first embodiment.

In the second embodiment, not only can the body hair be smoothly combed by the comb teeth 3a and 3a of the opposed comb tooth plates 3 and 3, but also no finger tip or no other foreign member can enter the small space defined between the opposed tips of the comb teeth 3a and 3a that are bent inward toward each other. Thus, a safe hair treatment implement can be realized.

The shape of the bent ends of the comb teeth 3a, 3a can be optionally designed. Figs. 8a through 8c show three different shapes of the bent ends of the comb teeth by way of example. As can be seen in Figs. 8b or 8c, it is possible to bent inward only one of the opposed comb teeth 3a, 3a.

It is also possible to bent inward only some of the comb teeth of one of the opposed comb tooth plates 3, 3 toward the other comb teeth. Alternatively, it is possible to combine the arch comb teeth in the first embodiment and the comb teeth in the second embodiment.

As can be understood from the above discussion, according to the present embodiments, in a hair treating implement in which the two comb tooth plates are spaced and opposed, and the heating element is provided between the comb tooth plates to come into contact with the hair combed by and placed between the adjacent comb teeth, when the heating element is supplied with the electrical power, it generates red-heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith.

In an embodiment, the tips of all or some of the opposed comb teeth are interconnected in the form of an arch, and hence not only can the body hair be smoothly combed but also the finger tip or other members cannot enter the space between the opposed comb plates. Thus, a safe hair treating implement can be obtained.

In another embodiment, the tips of all or some of

the comb teeth of at least one of the opposed comb plates are bent inward toward the corresponding comb teeth. Consequently, the body hair can be smoothly combed and it is possible to prevent the finger tip or other foreign members from entering a space defined between the opposed comb plates. Thus, a safe hair treating implement can be obtained.

In an embodiment, the comb tooth portion having two opposed comb tooth plates is formed as a removable comb tooth unit which can be detachably attached to the implement body. Consequently, not only can the comb tooth unit be easily washed when it is detached from the implement body, but also if the comb tooth is broken, the comb tooth unit can be easily and economically replaced with a new unit.

Still another embodiment of the present invention will be discussed below with reference to Figs. 9 through 22.

(1) Basic Structure of the Hair Treating Implement

An outer shell 11 of the hollow implement body 11 is molded of heat-resisting plastics, such as ABS resin, polycarbonate resin or delrin resin. The outer shell 11 is composed of a pair of right and left comb tooth plates 11a, 11a which are bent inward at the front ends as in the first embodiment. The distance between the opposed bent front ends of the comb teeth 11a and 11a is, for example, in the range of 0.5 to 1 mm. A hand grip 11b is formed integral with the rear end of the comb tooth plate 11a, and a plug cap 11c is provided at the rear ends of the hand grips 11b.

A circuit board 12 which will be discussed below in item (2) is incorporated in the implement body 11.

A heater cartridge 13 is inserted in the implement body 11 and between the comb tooth plates 11a, 11a at the front end thereof. The heater cartridge 13 will be discussed hereinafter in item (3).

In the illustrated embodiment, the outer shell 11 is split into two halves which can be connected or disconnected and which are each provided with the comb tooth plate 11a and the split hand grip portion 11b, as shown in Fig. 11. The two halves of the outer shell are interconnected by the plug cap 11c at the rear end of the hand grip 11b.

The hand grip 11b is in the form of a hollow cylindrical shank of appropriate diameter so as to provide a good feeling upon grasping. The plug cap 11c provided at the rear end of the hand grip 11b forms a part of the grip portion.

The plug cap 11c is provided on the rear end surface thereof with an insertion opening (connector hole) 11d in which the plug (power supply connector) 14c of the DC converter (Fig. 10) 14 is inserted.

There are two switch buttons 11e, 11e provided on the opposite sides of the implement body 11 in the vicinity of the base end of the hand grip. The switch buttons 11e are internally fitted in corresponding through holes

11f, 11f formed in the two shell halves 11, as shown in Fig. 11. The switch buttons 11e are each provided with a flange 11j at the base end thereof, that is adapted to prevent the switch buttons 11e from accidentally coming out of the through holes.

A transparent cover 11g is attached to an indication lamp opening 11h (Fig. 11) formed at the front end surface of the implement body 11. A heater cartridge detachment lever 11i is provided in the lower surface of the implement body 11 adjacent the base end of the hand grip.

In Fig. 10, the input plug 14a of the DC converter 14 is inserted in and connected to the receptacle (not shown) of the commercial power source (AC 100V), and the output plug 14c of the DC converter 14 is inserted in and connected to the connector hole 11d of the plug cap 11c. Consequently, the power is supplied to the implement body 11 from the external power source. The DC converter 14 and the output plug 14c are connected by an extension cord 14b. The heater cartridge 13 is inserted between the comb plates 11a, 11a from the front end of the comb tooth plates. In this state, when the switch buttons 11e are depressed, the power supply circuit of the circuit board 12 is closed so that the power is supplied to the tensed nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge 13 as an electric heating element, so that the nichrome wire 13a generates red-heat.

A user holds the hand grip 11 with his or her hand; combs the body hair using the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates 11a; brings the nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge 13 between the comb tooth plates 11a into contact with the body hair; and depresses the push button switches 11e using a thumb and an index finger of his or her hand which grasps the hand grip 11b. Consequently, the nichrome wire 13a generates red-heat. As a result, the body hair in contact with the nichrome wire 13a is burned and cut. The tips of the burned and cut hair are not sharp but round, unlike those sheared by a cutting tool. Thus, the drawbacks caused when the hair is sheared by a conventional cutter can be eliminated in the present embodiment.

The heating nichrome wire 13a is protected by the comb tooth plates 11a on opposite sides of the nichrome wire 13a, and hence there is no fear that the nichrome wire 13a directly contacts with the user's skin.

(2) Circuit Board 12 and Assembling of the Implement Body 10

The circuit board 12 will be explained below with reference to Figs. 14 and 15. The circuit board 12 is adapted to control the power supply to the nichrome fine wire 13a as an electrical heating element.

In the illustrated embodiment, the circuit board 12 is made of a printed circuit board having a predetermined shape of an insulated planar substrate which is provided thereon with a predetermined conductor pattern. Electric elements 100 (transistors, diodes, resistors,

condensers, LED, etc.) are arranged on the substrate and are soldered to the conductor pattern to provide desired functions. For clarity, the conductor pattern is not shown in the drawings.

The electronic circuit of the circuit board 12 has the following electric functions.

- a) power supply function to supply the nichrome wire 13a with the electric power at predetermined values of voltage and current when the switches 11e are depressed to close the electric circuit;
- b) timer function to automatically stop the power supply to the nichrome wire 13a when a predetermined time in which the push button switches 11e are continuously depressed to continue supplying the power buttons from the commencement of the power supply has lapsed, e.g., after the lapse of 30 to 50 seconds;
- c) state indication function to indicate that the power is supplied to the nichrome wire 13a in the power supply function a) and that the power supply to the nichrome wire 13a has been automatically stopped in the timer function b), in order to warn the user, by controlling the light emission state of the light emitting diode (LED) 101 as an indication lamp.

It is possible to prevent an overheating of the nichrome wire 13a which is caused when the power supply thereto continues for a time above a predetermined time, by the timer function b). If the power supply to the nichrome wire 13a is automatically stopped in the timer function b), it is possible to restart the power supply to the nichrome wire 13a by depressing the push button switches 11e again to reset the power supply function.

The light emitting diode 101 as an indication lamp in the indication function c) faces the opening 11h formed at the front end of the implement body 11. The opening 11h is covered by a transparent cover 11g through which the lighting state of the LED 101 can be viewed.

The circuit board 12 is provided thereon with the following elements.

- a) electrical contact pieces 12a, 12a which come into contact with the heater cartridge 13 attached to the implement body 11 to supply the electrical power to the nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge;
- b) tensing spring 12h for tensing the nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge 13 attached to the implement body 11;
- c) electrical switching contact pieces 12m, 12m of a power supply ON-OFF switch for the nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge 13 attached to the implement body 11; and
- d) power receiving connectors 12s and 12t electrically connected to the external power source.

The electrical contact pieces 12a, 12a are made of punched metal leaf springs which are held at the base ends thereof between insulating supports 12c and insulating washers 12d and which are opposed to the side surfaces of the circuit board 12. The contact pieces 12a, 12a are secured to the circuit board 12 by means of screws 12e and nuts 12f.

The contact pieces 12a, 12a are provided at the base ends thereof with terminals 12b which are formed by bending the contact pieces inwardly. When the contact pieces 12a, 12a are secured to the circuit board 11, the inwardly bent terminals 12b are inserted in and soldered to corresponding insertion holes 12g formed in the circuit board 12, so that the contact pieces 12a, 12a are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board 12.

The insulating supports 12c and the insulating washers 12d are made of an electrically insulating material. In the illustrated embodiment, they are molded of polycarbonate plastics.

The contact pieces 12a, 12a are elastically brought into contact at their front ends with electrode portions of the heater cartridge 13 attached to the implement body 11 on the opposite sides thereof to establish an electrical connection therebetween.

The shape of the contact pieces 12a, 12a and the mounting thereof to the circuit board 12 are not limited to those of the illustrated embodiment.

The tensing spring 12h is formed by punching a metal sheet into a predetermined shape of leaf spring. The leaf spring 12h is provided with an angle hole 12i in which the front end 12k of the circuit board 12 is perpendicularly engaged, so that the leaf spring 12h can be mounted to and held by the front end of the circuit board 12.

The leaf spring 12h comes into elastic contact with a movable support (rear substrate 132) of the nichrome wire 13a of the heater cartridge 13 attached to the implement body 11 at the front end 12j of the leaf spring 12h to provide a sufficient tensile force to the nichrome wire 13a.

The tensing spring 12h is not limited to the leaf spring in the illustrated embodiment and can be of any other type of springs.

The identical switching contact pieces (elastic conductors) 12m, 12m of the power supply ON-OFF switch are formed by punching a metal sheet. The contact pieces 12m, 12m are placed on opposite sides of the circuit board 12 and are each provided at the base end portions thereof with three terminals 12n which are bent inward toward the circuit board 12. The bent terminals 12n are inserted in and soldered to corresponding insertion holes 12q formed in the circuit board 12. Consequently, the contact pieces 12m, 12m are electrically connected to the electronic circuit of the circuit board 12 and are secured to the circuit board 12.

The contact pieces 12m, 12m are opposed to each other at the front ends 12p, 12p through an opening 12r

formed in the circuit board 12. The front ends 12q, 12q are spaced in a free state, so that the power supply circuit of the circuit board 12 is open (i.e., the power supply circuit is OFF).

The front ends of the central rod portions 11j, 11j (Fig. 11) provided in the switch buttons 11e, 11e are in soft contact with the neck portions (base portions of the front ends 12p) of the contact pieces 12m, 12m, respectively. Therefore, when the switch buttons 11e are depressed by operator's fingers, the contact pieces 12m, 12m are elastically deformed close to each other by the front ends of the rod portions 11j, 11j. Consequently, the contact pieces 12m, 12m are brought into contact with each other at the front ends 12p, 12p, so that the power supply circuit of the circuit board 12 is closed (turned ON). If the switch buttons 11e are released, the contact pieces 12m, 12m are returned to the initial position due to the elastic restoring force, so that the front ends 12p, 12p are disconnected from one another. Thus, the electronic circuit of the circuit board 12 is turned OFF.

Since the contact pieces 12m, 12m are connected to each other at the front ends 12p thereof to close the power supply circuit when any one (or both) of the push button switches 11e, 11e is depressed, it is not necessary for the operator to focus his or her attention upon selection of the push button switches 11e, 11e.

In the illustrated embodiment, as may be seen in Fig. 16, the contact pieces 12m, 12m are attached to the circuit board 12 in such a way that the longitudinal center axes O-O of the contact pieces define a predetermined angle, i.e., extend in different radial directions with respect to the front ends 12p of the contact pieces. With this arrangement, the durability of the switches which are repetitively turned ON and OFF can be enhanced.

The shape and the mounting mechanism of the push button switches 11e, 11e or the electrical contact pieces 12m, 12m are not limited to those in the illustrated embodiment.

The power receiving connectors 12s and 12t which can be electrically connected to the external power source are respectively made of a pin electrode 12s which extends outward from the rear end 12u of the circuit board 12 and a pair of parallel leaf spring electrodes 12t, 12t provided on opposite sides of the pin electrode 12s. The pin electrode 12s is soldered and secured at its base end to the circuit board 12 and is electrically connected to the electronic circuit of the circuit board.

The connectors 12s and 12t are placed in the connector hole 11d formed at the rear end of the plug cap 11c when the implement body is assembled. When the output plug 14c of the DC converter 14 (Fig. 10) is inserted in the connector hole 11d, the pin electrode 12s is fitted in the inner cylindrical electrode of the output plug 14c and the leaf spring electrodes 12t are elastically brought into contact with the outer cylindrical electrode surface of the output plug 14c. Thus, the elec-

trical power can be supplied to the implement body 11 from the external power source.

The shape and structure, etc., of the connectors 12s and 12t which can be electrically connected to the external power source are not limited to those in the illustrated embodiment.

The assembling operation of the implement body 11 will be discussed below with reference to Fig. 11.

1) The heater cartridge removing lever 11i is rotatably attached to one (first outer shell half) of the two halves of the outer shell of the implement body by fitting the post 11k provided on the outer shell half into the shaft hole formed in the heater removing lever 11i. Thereafter, the coil spring 11p is provided between a spring abutment pin 11m provided on the outer shell half and a spring abutment pin 11n provided on the lever 11i. Consequently, the lever 11i is continuously biased to rotate in the counterclockwise direction in Fig. 12 about the axis of the post 11k due to the spring force of the coil spring 11p. The switch button 11e is internally fitted in the through hole 11f for the switch button formed in the outer shell half.

2) The circuit board 12 which is provided thereon with the above-mentioned components a) through d), i.e., 12a, 12a, 12h, 12m, 12m, 12s and 12t is placed on the outer shell half which is provided thereon with the lever 11i and the switch button 11e so that positioning members 12v, 12v provided on the circuit board 12 are engaged in corresponding positioning members 11q provided on the outer shell half.

3) The other outer shell half (second outer shell half) which is provided with the switch button 11e internally fitted in the through hole 11f thereof is superimposed on the first outer shell half which is provided thereon with the lever 11i, the switch button 11e and the circuit board 12, so that the hooks 11r provided on the second outer shell half are engaged by corresponding engaging members 11s provided on the first outer shell half. Thereafter, the two halves 11 are integrally connected by a fastening screw 11t. As shown in Fig. 11, a screw insertion hole 11u is formed in the second outer shell half and a threaded hole 11v is formed in the first outer shell half, so that the screw 11t can be screwed in the threaded hole 11v through the insertion hole 11u.

4) The plug cap 11c is fitted to the rear end of the hand grip 11b constituted by the two outer shell halves. In the illustrated embodiment, the plug cap 11c can be detachably attached to the rear end of the hand grip 11b by means of a bayonet connector (combination of a groove and a projection). The transparent cover 11g is attached to the indication lamp window 11h formed at the front end surface of the assembly of the two halves to cover the same.

In the illustrated embodiment, a decorative seal 11w is attached to the second outer shell half to cover the head of the screw 11t inserted in the insertion hole 11u of the second outer shell half, so that the head of the screw 11t which would be otherwise exposed to the outside cannot be seen from outside.

The assembling of the implement body 11 is completed by the assembling operations 1) through 4).

Thus, the electrical contact pieces 12a, 12a which are adapted to supply the power to the electrical heating element 13a, the tensing spring 12h for tensing the electrical heating element, the electrical switching contact pieces 12m, 12m for switching the power supply to the electrical heating element, the power receiving connectors 12s and 12t which can be connected to the external power source are provided on the circuit board 12 to be arranged in the implement body. Consequently, when the circuit board 12 is arranged in the implement body, all the above mentioned components, i.e., the electrical contact pieces 12a, 12a, the tensing means 12h, the electrical switching contact pieces 12m, 12m, and the power receiving connectors 12s and 12t can be arranged together in the implement body. Therefore, no individual arrangements or incorporation or wiring of the internal components is necessary. Also, there is no wiring error.

Namely, the assembling operation or the wiring operation can be simplified, and thus not only can the yield of the parts or products be increased, but also the manufacturing cost can be reduced. Consequently, the high quality and inexpensive products can be produced.

(3) Heater Cartridge 13

The heater cartridge 13 will be discussed below, chiefly referring to Figs. 17 through 21.

As may be seen in Fig. 18, the heater cartridge 13 is essentially comprised of front and rear substrates 131 and 132 which are split by a V-shaped line substantially at the center portion and which are made of an longitudinally elongated plate of an insulating material, conductor pattern layers (Cu) 133, 134, 135, 136 formed on the front and rear substrates 131 and 132, an electrical heating element (nichrome fine wire of 0.1 to 0.14 mm ϕ in the illustrated embodiment) 13a which extends between the downward projection 137 provided on the front substrate 131 at the front end thereof and the downward projection 138 provided on the rear substrate 132 at the rear end thereof, and elongated side plates 139 and 140 that extend in the longitudinal direction to hold the front and rear substrates 131 and 132 therebetween and that have a generally L-shape cross section.

The front substrate 131 is made of a printed circuit board which is provided with the conductor pattern layers 133 and 134 that lie on the substantially entire right side surface thereof and on the projection 137 of the left side surface, respectively. The rear substrate 132 is made of a printed circuit board which is provided with

the conductor pattern layers 135 and 136 that lie on the substantially entire left side surface thereof and on the projection 138 of the right side surface, respectively.

The front substrate 131 and the left side plate 139 are interconnected by caulking a pin 141 inserted in eyelets thereof. Likewise, the front substrate 131 and the right side plate 140 are interconnected by caulking a pin 142 inserted in eyelets thereof. Therefore, the front substrate 131 and the left and right side plates 139 and 140 are secured together by the pins 141 and 142.

In the illustrated embodiment, the left and right side plates 139 and 140 are made of a metal plate such as iron and the pins 141 and 142 are also made of a metal. To prevent the left and right side plates 139 and 140 from being electrically interconnected through the pins 141 and 142, the right side plate 140 is provided with a large pin receiving hole 143 so that the pin 141 which secures the front substrate 131 to the left side plate 139 does not contact with the right side plate 140. Likewise, the left side plate 139 is provided with a large pin receiving hole 144 so that the pin 142 which secures the front substrate 131 to the right side plate 140 does not contact with the left side plate 139. If the side plates 139 and 140 or the pins 141 and 142 are made of an insulating material, the large diameter pin receiving holes 143 and 144 are unnecessary.

The rear substrate 132, and the left and right side plates 139 and 140 are secured by means of a single insulated pin 145. The rear substrate 132 is rotatable in opposite directions (up and down) about the pin 145 between the left and right side plates 139 and 140.

The nichrome wire 13a is wound at its front and rear ends about the front projection 137 of the front substrate 131 and the rear projection 138 of the rear substrate 132, respectively and tensely extends therebetween. In the illustrated embodiment, the effective length of the nichrome wire 13a is 40 - 50 mm.

The rear substrate 132 receives a rotation moment due to the tensile force of the nichrome wire 13a, and tends to rotate in the counterclockwise direction (upward) in Fig. 20 about the insulated pin 145. Consequently, the upper oblique surface of the V-convex shaped front end of the rear substrate 132 is pressed against the upper oblique surface of the corresponding V-recess shaped rear end of the front substrate 131 (Fig. 18).

The left and right comb tooth plates 11a, 11a of the implement body 11 are provided, on the inner walls of the spine portions thereof, with guide grooves 11x, 11x which extend in the longitudinal direction, so that guide projections 146 and 147 provided on the left and right side plates 139 and 140 of the heater cartridge 13 can be slidably fitted in the corresponding guide grooves 11x, 11x.

The heater cartridge 13 is inserted between the comb tooth plates 11a, 11a at the front end of the implement body 11, with the front substrate 131 located forward. During the insertion, the guide projections 146

and 146 are slid in the corresponding guide grooves 11x, 11x.

When the heater cartridge is fully inserted in the implement body, the front ends of the electrical contact pieces 12a, 12a provided on the circuit board 12 are brought into press-contact with the conductor pattern layer 135 of the rear substrate 132 and the conductor pattern layer 133 of the front substrate 131, through recesses 148 and 149 formed in the left and right side plates 139 and 140 of the heater cartridge 13 to establish an electrical connection therebetween, respectively (Fig. 13a).

The front end 12j of the metal leaf spring 12h as a tensing means provided on the circuit board 12 at the front end thereof is brought into contact with a recess 152 formed on the rear substrate 132 of the heater cartridge 13, so that the rear substrate 132 is biased to rotate in the clockwise direction in Fig. 20 about the pin 145 against the tensile force of the nichrome wire 13a (Fig. 13a, Figs. 19 and 20).

Consequently, in the state that the heater cartridge 13 is mounted to the implement body 11, the nichrome wire 13a extends tensely adjacent to base ends of the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates 11a and between the comb tooth plates 11a, 11a that are spaced from one another at a distance "w".

When the switch button 11e is depressed to turn the power supply circuit ON in the state that the heater cartridge is mounted to the implement body, the electric current flows in one of the electric contact pieces 12a → the conductor pattern layer 135 → the nichrome wire 13a → the conductor pattern layer 133 → the other electric contact piece 12a (and vice versa).

The nichrome wire 13a extending between the front projection 137 of the front substrate 131 and the rear projection 138 of the rear substrate 132 is elongated due to the linear expansion when it generates heat. As a result of the elongation, the rear substrate 132 is rotated about the pin 145 in the clockwise direction in Figs. 20 and 21 by the metal leaf spring 12h (tensing means). Consequently, the distance between the front and rear projections 137 and 138 between which the nichrome wire 13a extends is increased, so that the elongation (looseness) of the nichrome wire 13a can be absorbed. Thus, the nichrome wire 13a is always kept in a tensed state (Fig. 21).

If the nichrome wire 13a is broken, the heater cartridge detaching lever 11i is manually rotated in the clockwise direction about the post 11k against the coil spring 11p as shown in Fig. 13b. Consequently, the attached heater cartridge 13 is pressed downward at the front end thereof by the rotating lever 11i. Thus, the rear end (grip portion) 150 of the rear substrate 132 is protruded out of the front ends of the comb tooth plates 11a.

Thereafter, the operator holds the grip portion 150 with his or her fingers and pulls the heater cartridge in the direction opposite to the insertion direction to

remove the heater cartridge from the space between the comb tooth plates. Thereafter, a new heater cartridge 13 can be inserted in the implement body.

(Other Operations)

The circuit board 12 is not limited to a printed circuit board and can be replaced with other substrates.

The electric heating element 13a is in the form of a line or rod extending between the power supplying electrodes. The line of rod can be comprised of a heating element which is electrically connected to the power supplying electrodes and an insulator (outer shell) which houses therein the heating element, wherein when the insulator is heated by the heat generated by the heating element so that the insulator indirectly generates heat, no or little elongation or contraction due to the linear expansion is caused thereby. With this arrangement, it is not necessary to provide a means for tensing the electric heating element, thus resulting in a simplification of the structure.

Fig. 22 shows an example of such heating element 13a. The heating element 13a is comprised of a rigid thin rod or tube a core (heating wire) 13aa made of nichrome fine wire whose diameter is in the range of 0.1 to 0.14 mm Ø, and a tubular body 13ac of nickel (formed by, for example, drawing) which is provided on its inner surface with an insulator 13ab of, for example, alumina. The core 13aa is inserted or embedded in the insulator 13ab. The leading ends 13ad, 13ad of the nichrome wire 13aa extend outward from the tubular body 13ac and are connected to the power supply electrodes. The total thickness of the tubular body 13ac and the insulator 13ab is in the range of 0.2 to 0.4 mm.

The power supply system is not limited to the external power supply system using an external power source, in which the power is supplied to the implement from the commercial power source through the DC converter 14. The internal power supply system in which a dry battery or storage battery is incorporated in the implement body can be also used.

The present invention is not limited to a hair treating implement using a detachable heater cartridge having an electric heating element and can be applied to a hair treating implement having a built-in heating element.

As can be understood from the foregoing, according to the present invention, since the electric contact pieces which are brought into contact with the heater cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the electrical power to the electric heating element of the heater cartridge from the implement body are provided on the circuit board arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to the electronic circuit of the circuit board, the contact pieces can be arranged in the implement body together with the circuit board.

Consequently, no separate placement or wiring operation of the contact pieces is necessary. In addition, there is no fear of a wiring error. Furthermore, no wiring

operation is needed in the manufacturing process of the hair treating implement. This effect is the same as that expected from the printed circuit board.

Since the tensing means for tensing the heating element of the heater cartridge attached to the implement body is attached to the circuit board arranged in the implement body, the tensing means can be automatically arranged in the implement body when the circuit board is arranged in the implement body.

Consequently, no separate placement of the tensing means is necessary. Hence, there is no fear that the tensile force by the tensing means is weakened due to a placement error. Furthermore, assembling operation can be simplified. This effect is also equivalent to that of the printed circuit board.

Since the electrical contact pieces for the ON-OFF switches for switching the power supply to the heater cartridge attached to the implement body is attached to the circuit board arranged in the implement body and is electrically connected to the electronic circuit of the circuit board, the contact pieces can be automatically arranged in the implement body when the circuit board is arranged in the implement body.

Consequently, no separate placement or wiring of the electrical contact pieces for the ON-OFF switches is necessary. Hence, there is no fear of a wiring error. Furthermore, no wiring operation is needed in the manufacturing process of the hair treating implement. In the prior art, the switch provided on the substrate or circuit board is used, but the contact pieces for the switch are not provided on the circuit board or substrate. The number of the manufacturing process and the number of the components can be reduced in the present invention.

Since the power receiving connector which can be electrically connected to the external power source is attached to the circuit board arranged in the implement body and is electrically connected to the electronic circuit of the circuit board, the power receiving connector can be automatically arranged in the implement body when the circuit board is arranged in the implement body.

Consequently, no separate placement or wiring of the power receiving connector is necessary. Hence, there is no fear of a wiring error. Furthermore, no wiring operation is needed in the manufacturing process of the hair treating implement. In the prior art, the connector provided on the substrate or circuit board is used, but the contact pieces for the connector are not provided on the circuit board or substrate. The number of the manufacturing process and the number of the components can be reduced in the present embodiment.

In the present embodiment, the electrical contact pieces which are adapted to supply the power to the electrical heating element, the tensing means for tensing the electrical heating element, the electrical switching contact pieces for switching the power supply to the electrical heating element, and the power receiving connectors which can be connected to the external power

source are provided on the circuit board to be arranged in the implement body. Consequently, when the circuit board is arranged in the implement body, all the above mentioned components can be arranged together in the implement body. Therefore, no individual placement or wiring of the internal components is necessary. Also, there is no wiring error.

The present invention is not limited to a hair treating implement using a detachable heater cartridge having an electric heating element and can be applied to a hair treating implement having a built-in heating element.

According to the present invention, the assembling operation or the wiring operation can be simplified or eliminated, and thus not only can the yield of the parts or products be increased, but also the manufacturing cost can be reduced. Consequently, the high quality and inexpensive products can be produced.

Claims

1. A body hair treating implement including a pair of opposed and spaced comb tooth plates and an electrical heating element which is provided between the comb tooth plates and is brought into contact with body hair combed by the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates, so that when the electrical heating element is supplied with the electrical power, the heating element generates heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith, wherein the opposed comb teeth of the opposed comb tooth plates are entirely or partly interconnected at their tip ends in the form of an arch.
2. A body hair treating implement including a pair of opposed and spaced comb tooth plates and an electrical heating element which is provided between the comb tooth plates and is brought into contact with body hair combed by the comb teeth of the comb tooth plates, so that when the electrical heating element is supplied with the electrical power, the heating element generates heat to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith, wherein the comb teeth of at least one of the opposed comb tooth plates are entirely or partly bent inward at their tip ends toward the corresponding comb teeth of the other comb tooth plate.
3. A body hair treating implement according to claim 1, wherein said comb tooth plates are integrally formed as a comb tooth unit which can be detachably attached to an implement body.
4. A body hair treating implement according to claim 2, wherein distance between tip ends of said pair of comb tooth plates are being set between 0.5 - 1.0 mm.
5. A body hair treating implement including an electri-

cal heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein electrical contact pieces which are brought into contact with the cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge from the implement body are provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.

6. A body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein a tensing spring for tensing the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body.
7. A body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein electrical contact pieces for a power supply switch to select the power supply to the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge are provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.
8. A body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein a power receiving connector which can be connected to an external power source is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body and are electrically connected to an electronic circuit of the circuit board.
9. A body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, said electrical heating element being made of a removable cartridge which can be detachably attached to an implement body, wherein at least one of the following features a), b), c) and d) is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the

implement body:

- a) electrical contact pieces which come into contact with the removable cartridge attached to the implement body to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the cartridge;
 - b) a tensing spring for tensing the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body;
 - c) electrical switching contact pieces of a power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element of the removable cartridge attached to the implement body; and
 - d) a power receiving connector which is electrically connected to an external power source.
10. A body hair treating implement including an electrical heating element which generates heat when energized to burn and cut a body hair in contact therewith, wherein at least one of the following features a), b), c) and d) is provided on a circuit board to be arranged in the implement body:
 - a) an electrode member which is adapted to supply the electrical power to the electrical heating element of the cartridge;
 - b) a tensing spring for tensing the electrical heating element;
 - c) electrical switching contact pieces of a power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element; and
 - d) a power receiving connector which is electrically connected to an external power source.
 11. A body hair treating implement according to anyone of claims 5 to 9, wherein said electrical heating element is a heating wire or heating tube which directly or indirectly generates heat when energized to burn and cut the body hair in contact therewith.
 12. A body hair treating implement according to claim 7, 9 or 11, wherein said electrical switching contact pieces of the power supply ON-OFF switch for the electrical heating element are made of two elastic conductors which are supported at the base ends thereof by the circuit board and which can be elastically deformed so that the front ends of the elastic conductors are brought into contact with each other to close a power supply circuit, said elastic conductors being interconnected at the base ends thereof and being provided with longitudinal axes extending in different radial directions with respect to the interconnected base ends thereof.

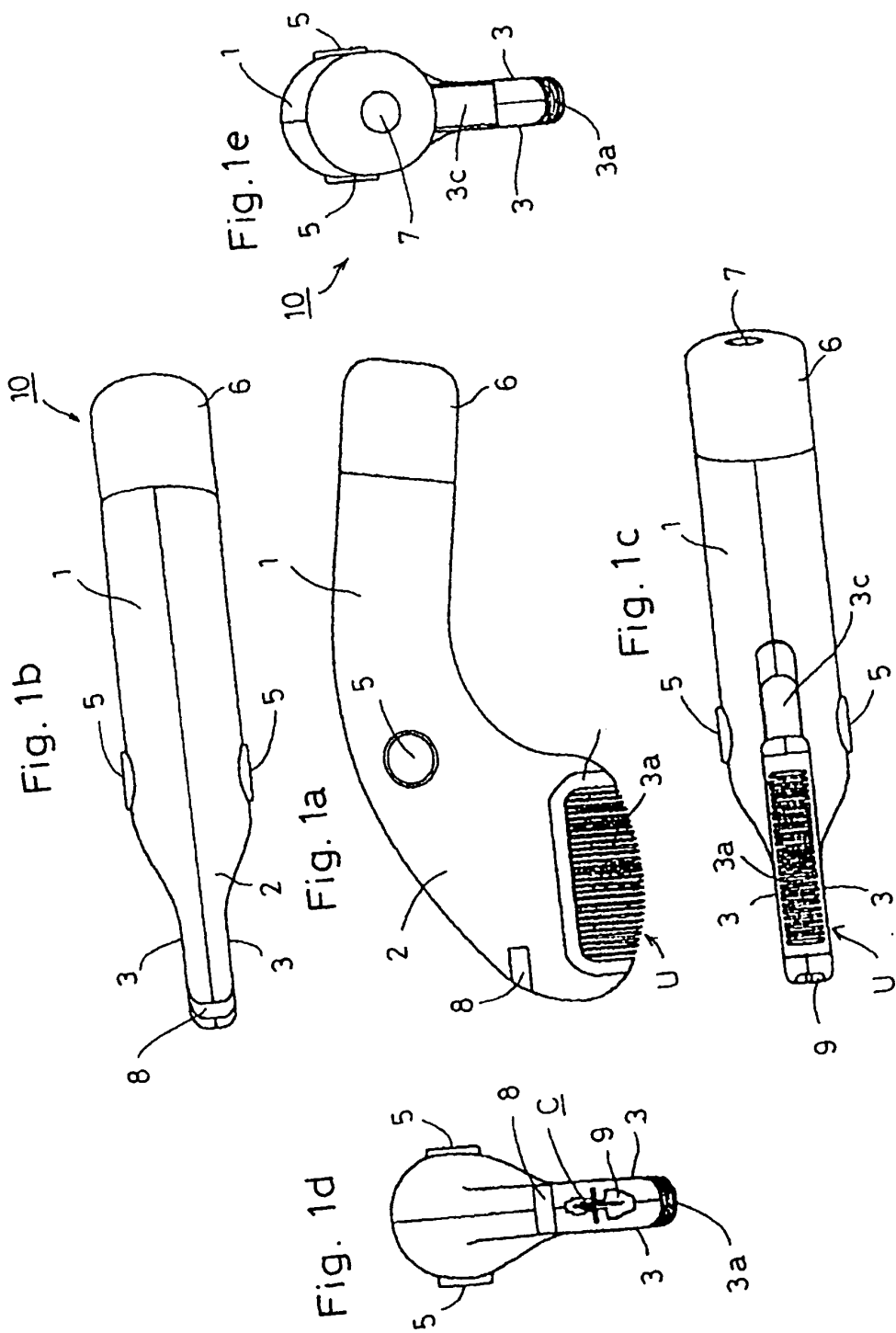


Fig. 2

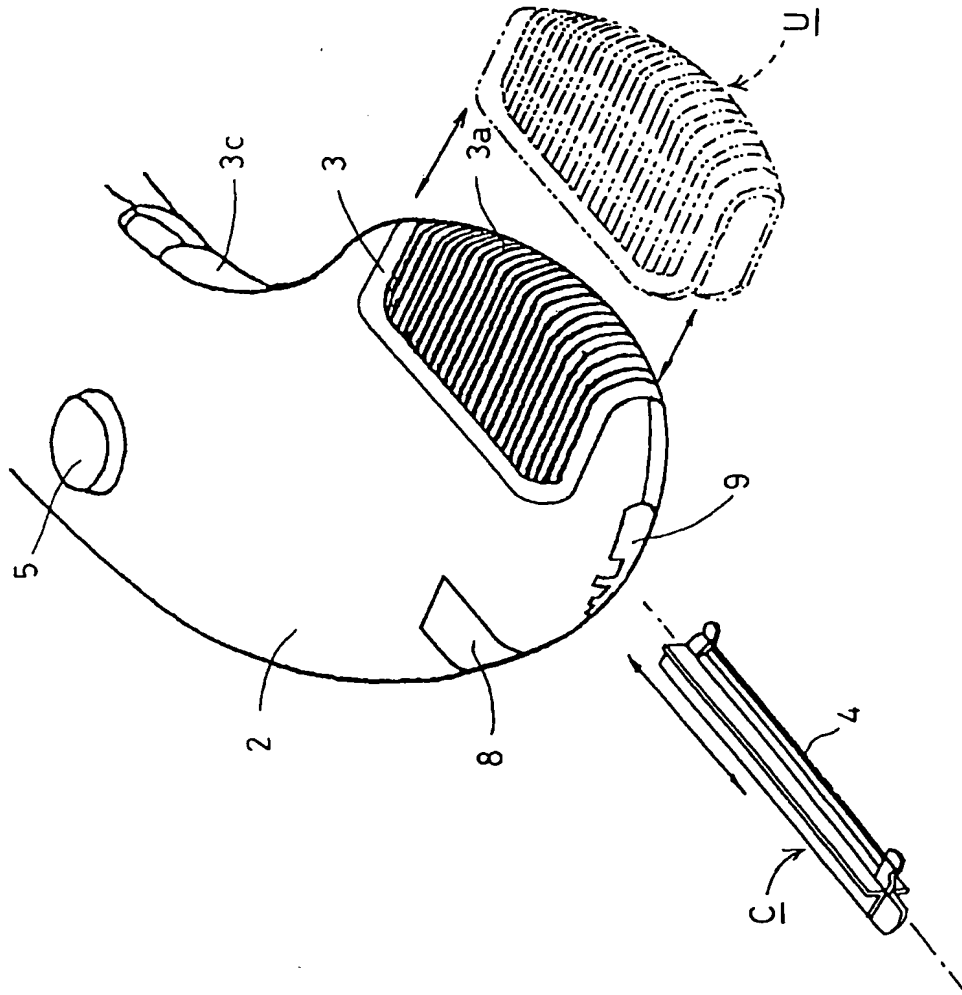


Fig. 3

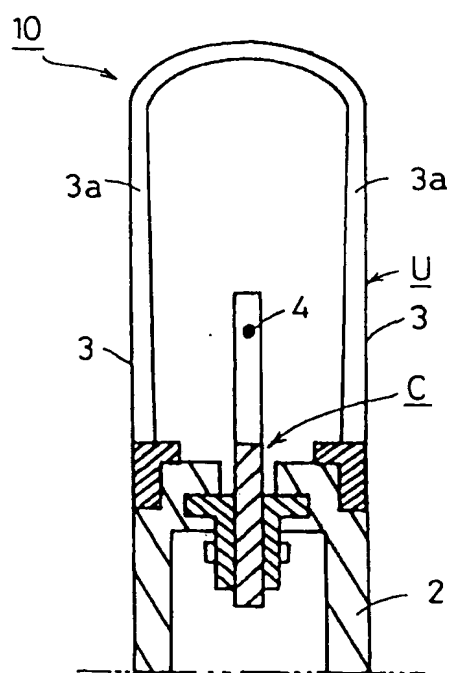


Fig. 4a

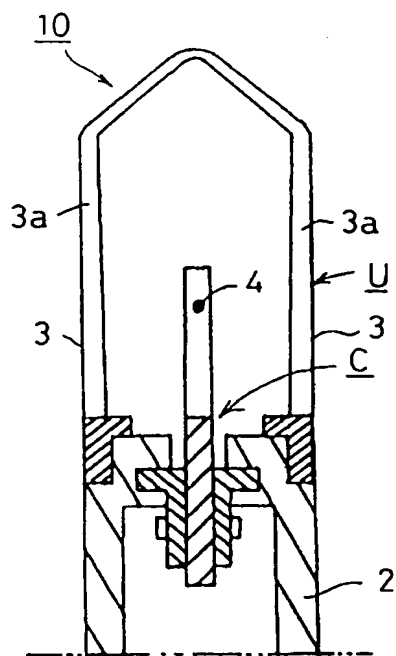


Fig. 4b

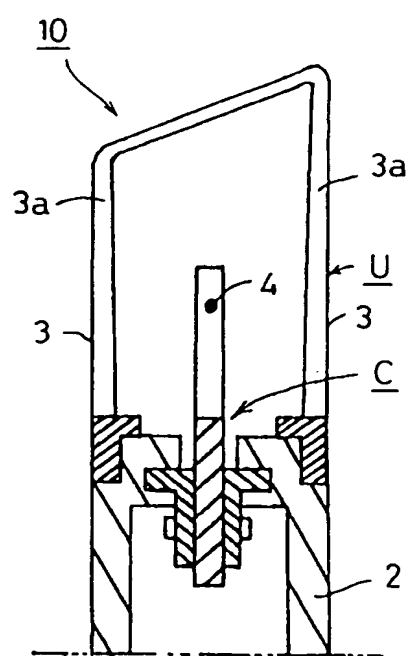


Fig. 5

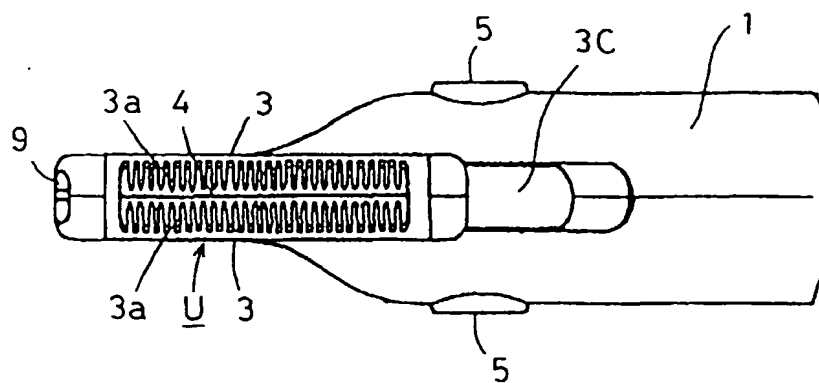


Fig. 6

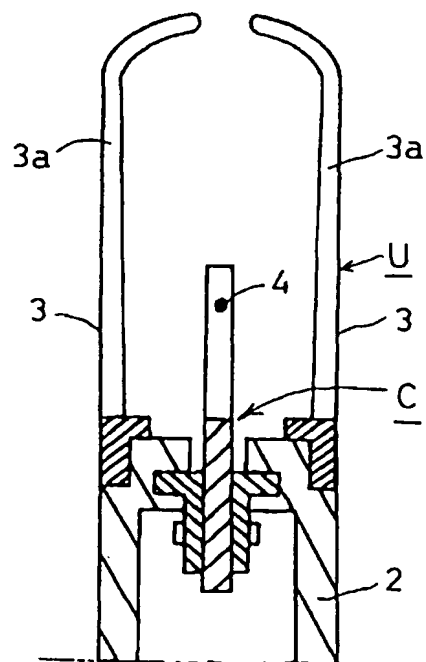


Fig. 7a

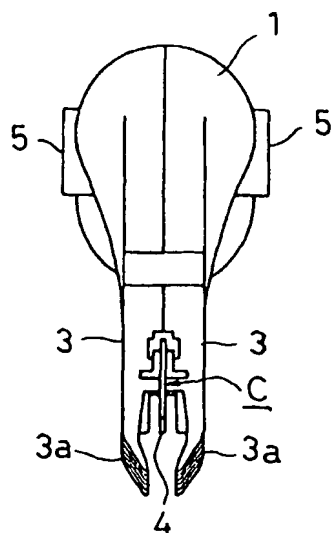


Fig. 7b

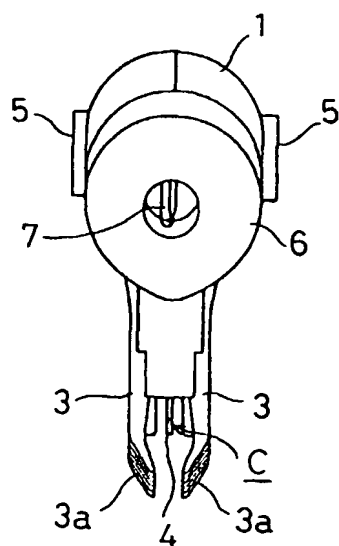


Fig. 8c

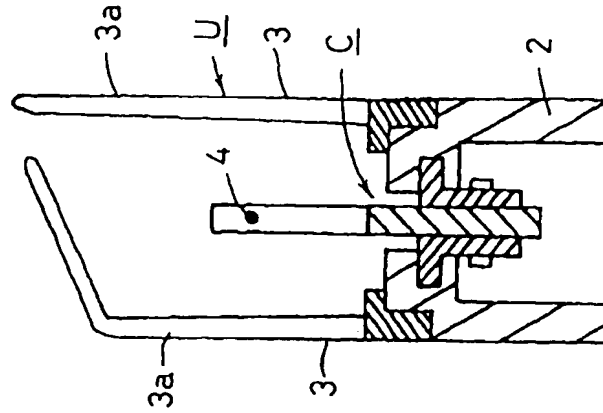


Fig. 8b

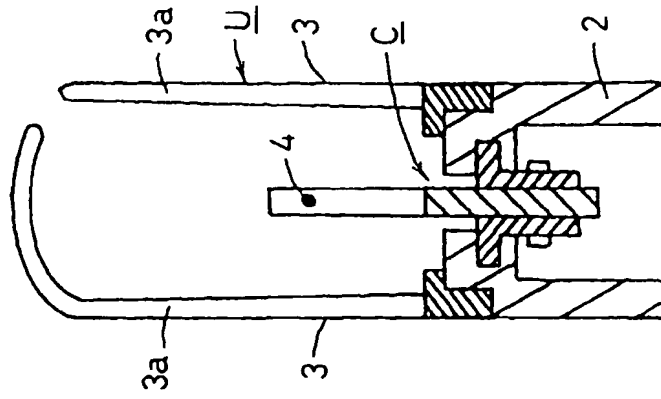
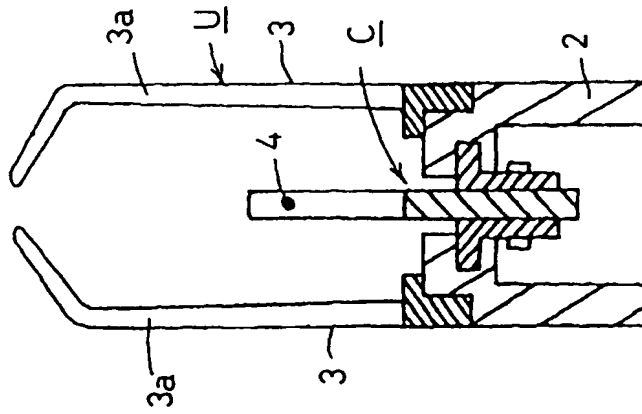


Fig. 8a



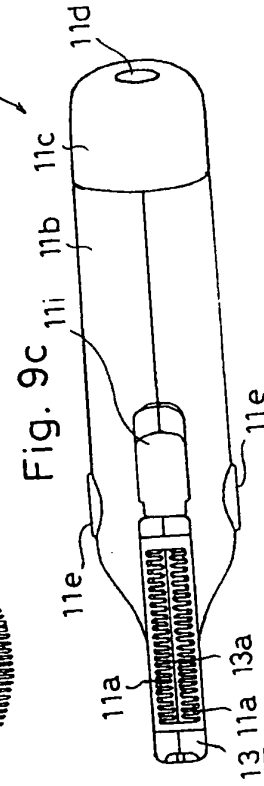
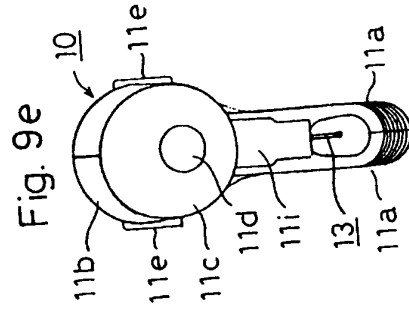
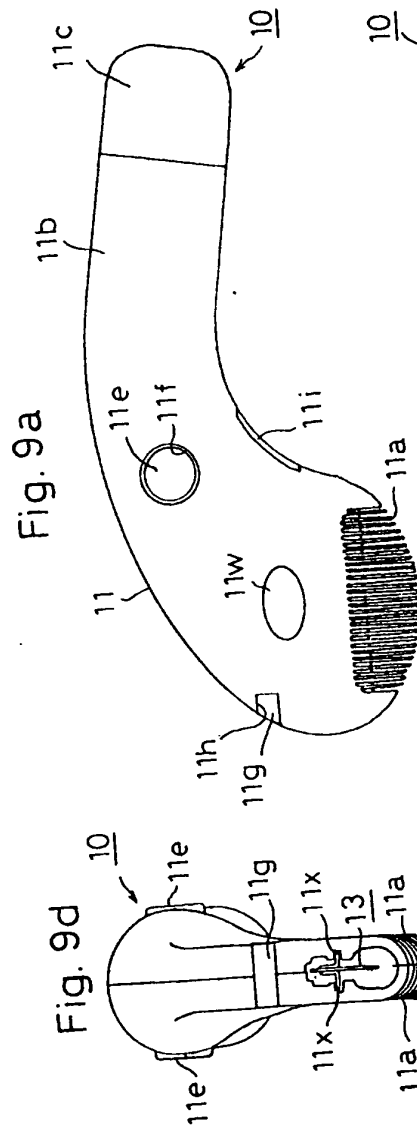
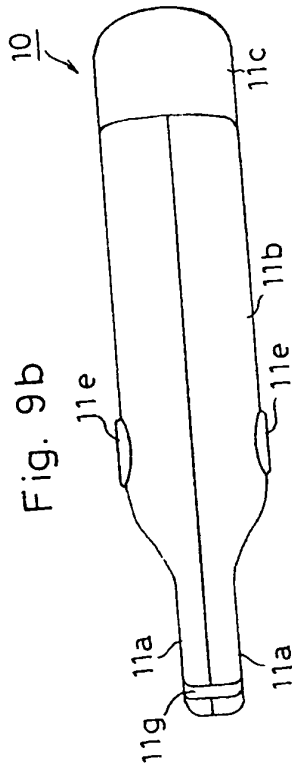


Fig. 10

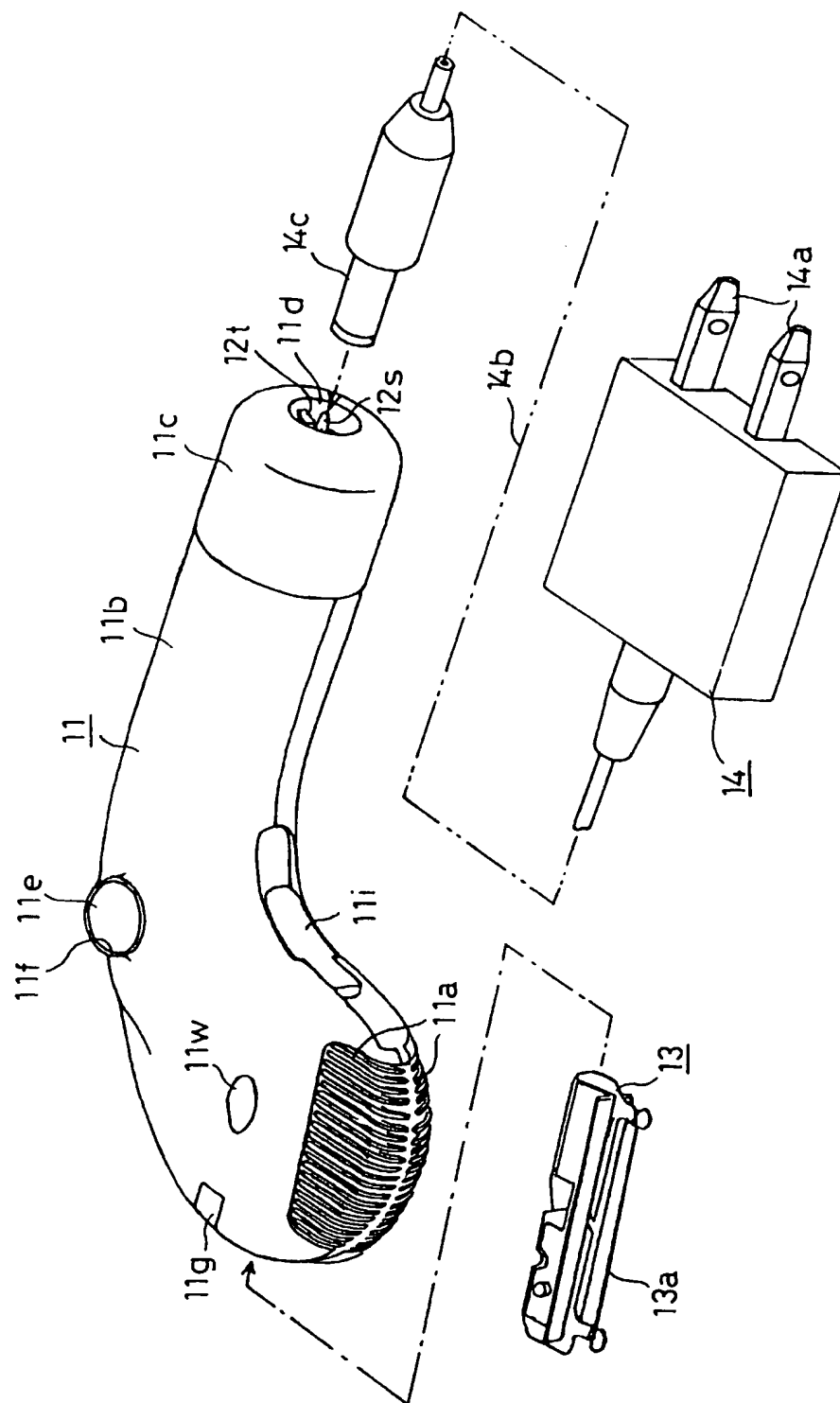


Fig. 11

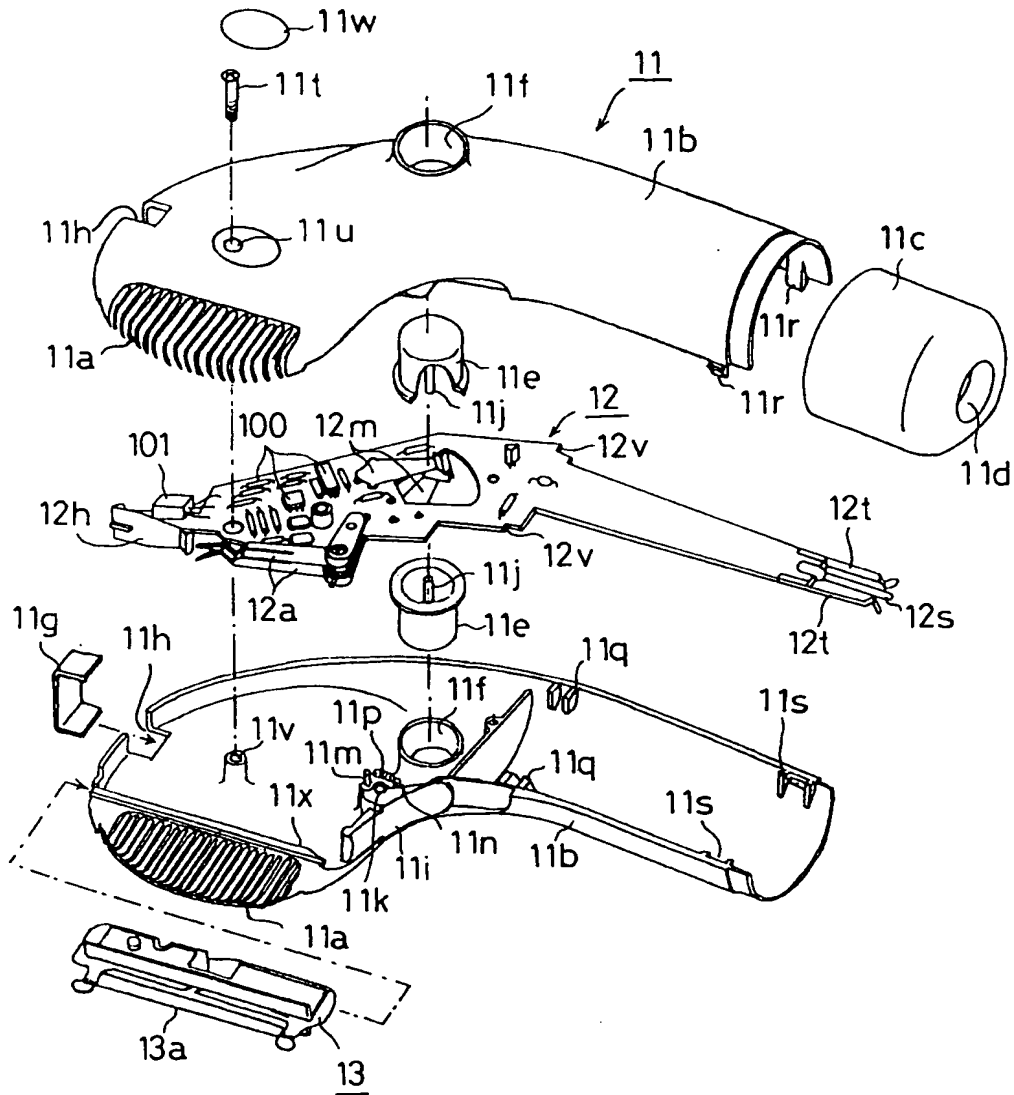


Fig. 12

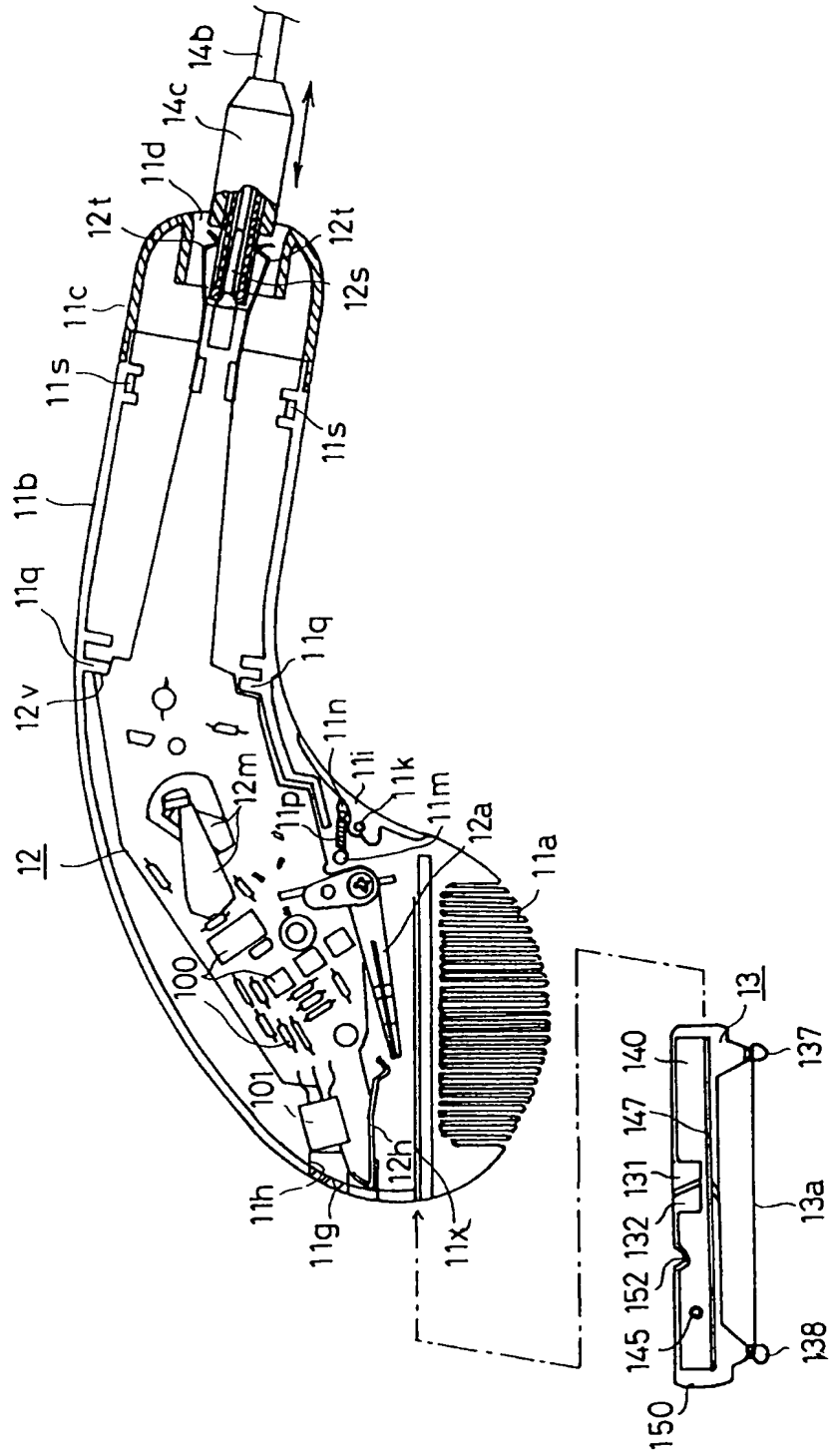


Fig. 13a

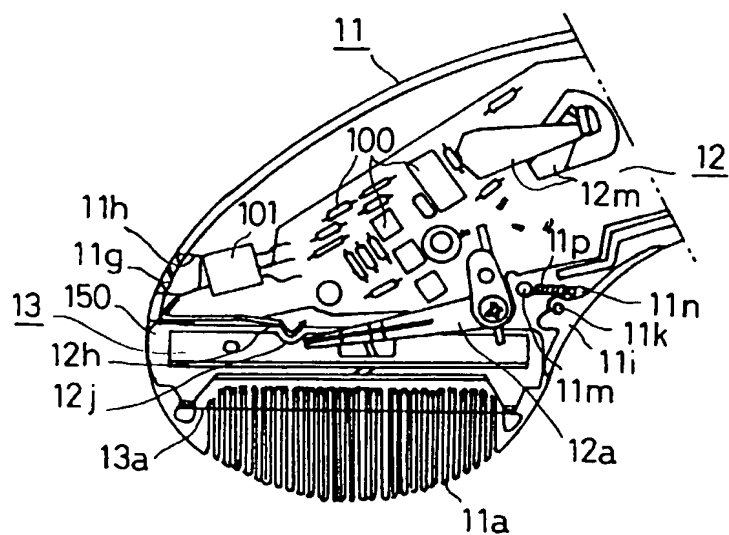


Fig. 13b

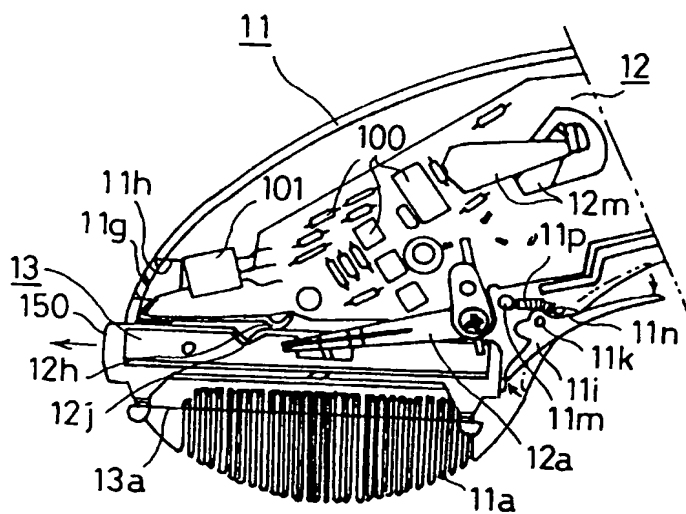


Fig. 14

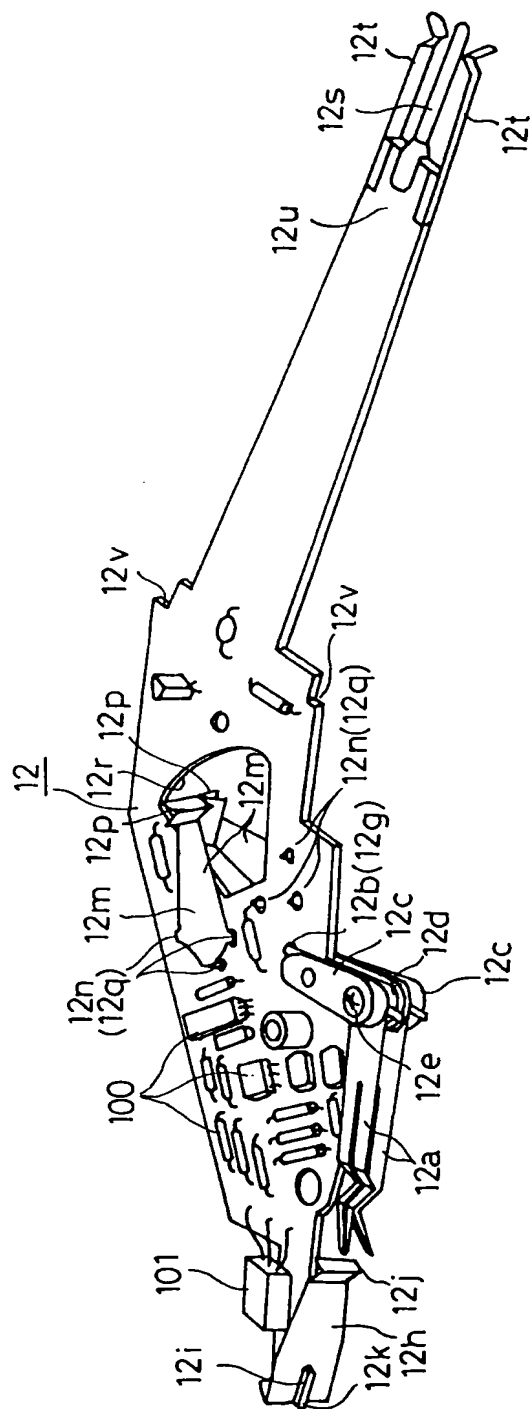


Fig. 15

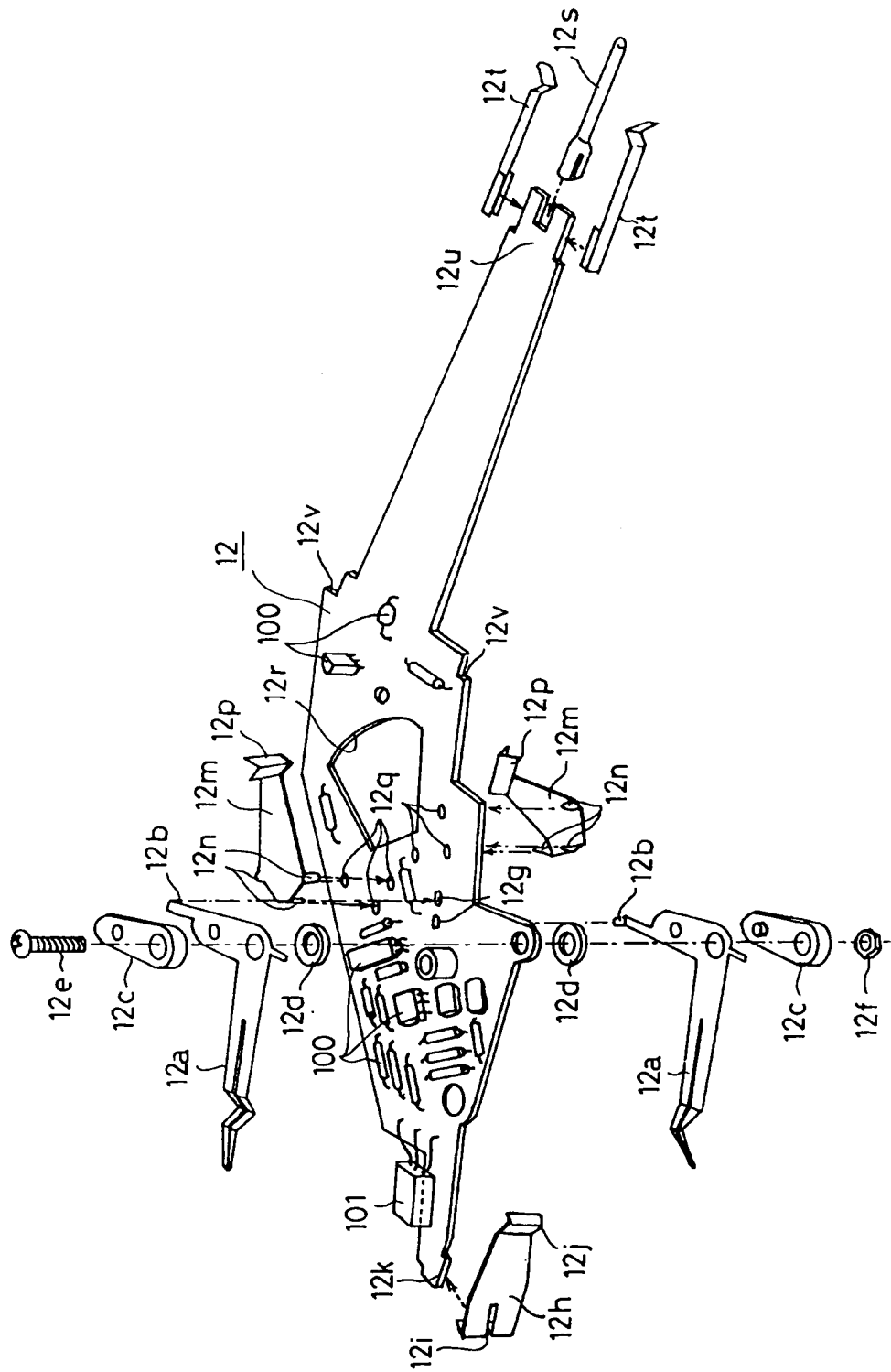


Fig. 16

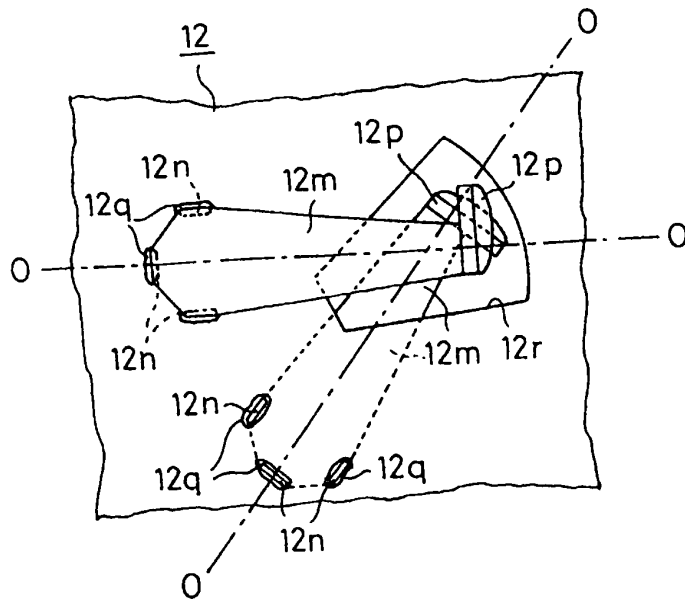


Fig. 17

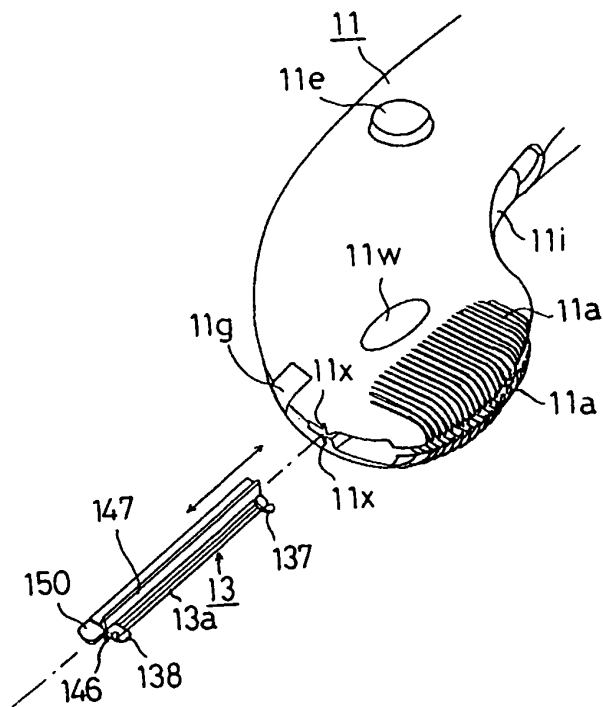


Fig. 18

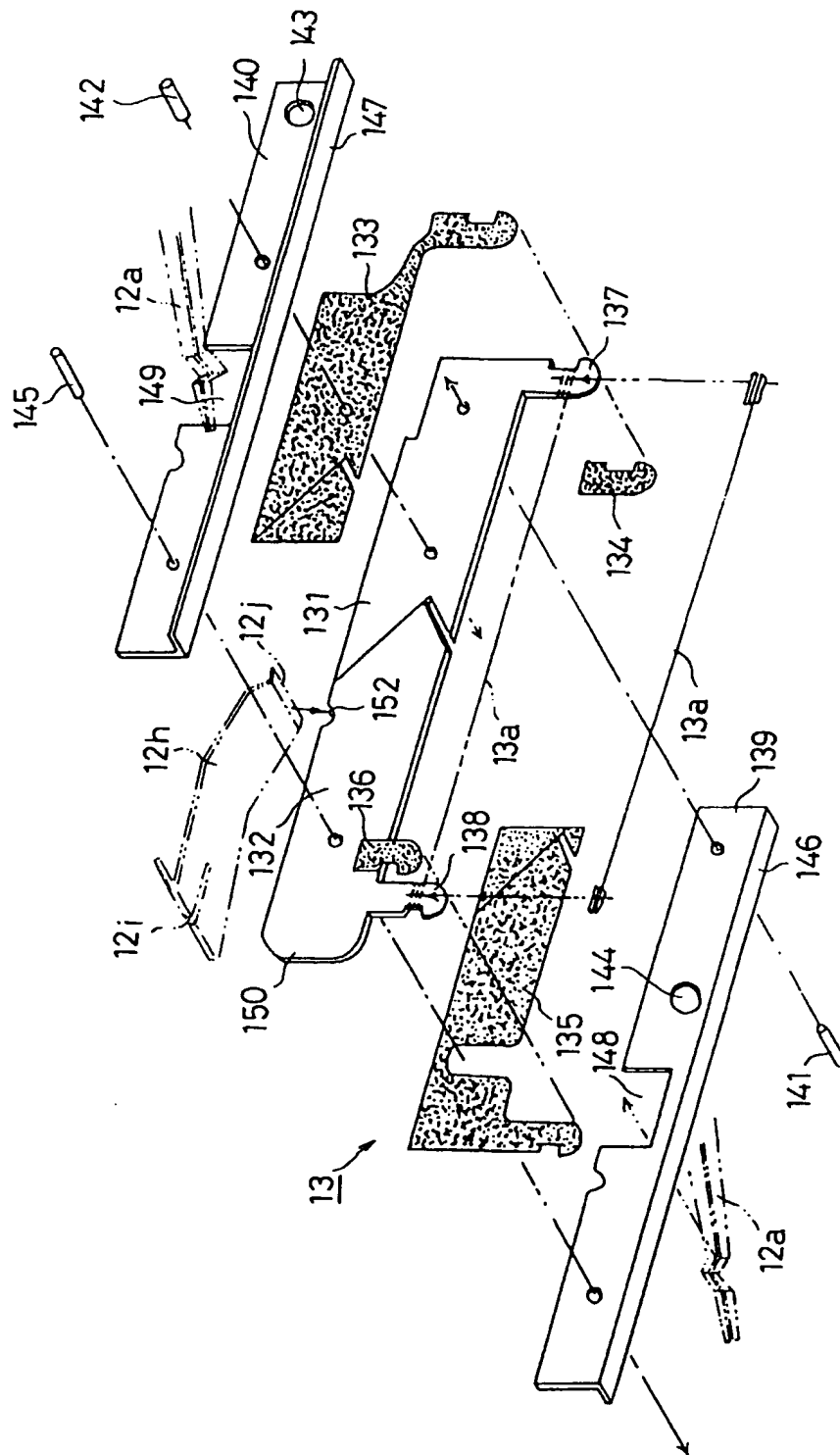


Fig. 19

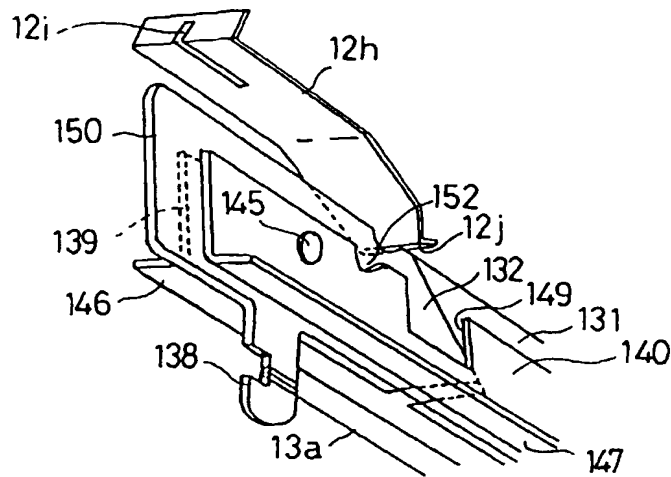


Fig. 20

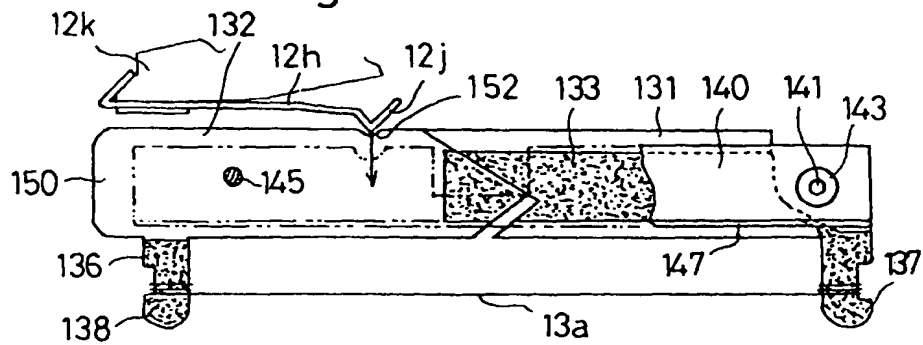


Fig. 21

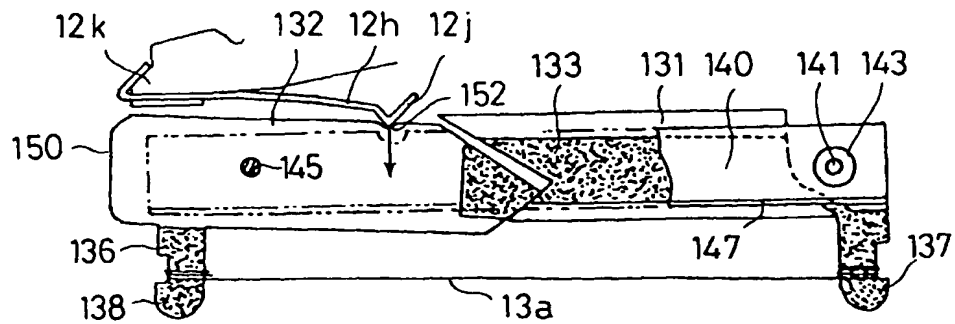


Fig. 22

